



The Ascent Small Business The Best Marketing Automation Software Options for Small Businesses

Outsourcing Your Marketing: A Small Business Guide

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Our Small Business Expert

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This guide will help you determine why you should outsource, what aspects of your small business marketing you should outsource, and the advantages and disadvantages of doing so.

Marketing consists of everything that makes your products or services attractive to potential customers, and a lot of work goes into that. Not every small business has the bandwidth to handle the day-to-day operations of a business, plus the marketing, so hiring a sales and marketing outsourcing company is a good solution.

Hiring a marketing agency can be pricey, but it doesn't have to break the bank. Even the smallest of towns has, at the very least, social media management businesses. Let's get into more details.

Overview: What is outsourced marketing?

Hiring a web designer, a photographer, a printing shop, or a social media manager are all ways to outsource your marketing. Those experts can take aspects of your business off your hands. If you're lucky, you'll find a marketing company that can take on all your marketing needs, but for small and local businesses, that might not be necessary or even available.

4 reasons small businesses outsource marketing

You may have a million reasons to outsource your marketing, but think seriously about them before opening your wallet. The following are the most common, and best, reasons to outsource your marketing.

1. To save time

Many small businesses operate with a staff of less than five. Sometimes, the business owner or owners are running the whole

show. It's unlikely they have time to worry about marketing materials. So marketing ends up either on the back burner, not getting done at all, or done inconsistently. That's the perfect time to look for someone to handle it for you.

The highest priority is your website. It's probably the first thing people seek out when they want to learn about your business.

Local web designers are great because they can help keep costs down, and they're more likely to keep the lines of communication open. Next, consider working with a graphic designer for business cards, brochures, flyers, and similar jobs. A cohesive marketing plan will begin to emerge which you can carry over into your social media and advertising efforts.

2. To fill a knowledge gap

Marketing experience isn't a requirement to start a business, so it's not surprising that most business owners don't have marketing experience. That's why other people start small businesses specializing in marketing. There's no shame in using those businesses.

3. To spearhead a rebranding

Maybe you're finally getting your footing and figuring out exactly what your business is and wants to be. Time for a rebrand. Whether it's a refresher or total brand development, use professionals. A set

of outside, objective eyes can help you realize things you never considered and think of things you never would have thought of, such as how font style can influence the market your product or service appeals to.

This effort can be as intensive or as superficial as you want it to be, but don't tackle it all on your own. You'll have to provide a lot of information to the company you go with. For example, who are your customers, and what inspired your existing branding? Being open and honest will only help the process.

4. To save money

You might wonder how hiring a marketing agency can save you money, but it can when compared to hiring a full-time employee, with the salary, benefits, and taxes you incur. You can also outsource on a case-by-case basis. Even if you have, let's say, a web designer on retainer, you can work out a payment plan that works for both parties.

Advantages of outsourcing marketing

Aside from the obvious advantages of not having to worry about creating your marketing materials, there are other key advantages to outsourcing. What are those advantages? Find out below.

Leaves you time to refocus on your business

If someone else handles your marketing, you'll have more time to focus on other areas of your business. Maybe you'll finally tackle inventory, or you'll review your budget to see if there's room to add more products or services. No matter how you spend that time, you can do so knowing marketing's covered.

Increases exposure of your business

When you get your website up and running and some marketing materials created, your business will become more recognizable, and you'll start to experience an increase in interest in what you offer.

Helps narrow down target audience once and for all

Handing marketing off to someone else means you must clearly define for them who your customers are. It's a perfect time to create a buyer persona, and you may discover market segments you'd have never considered without an outsourced marketing firm.

Allows you to track analytics

Depending on the person or agency you outsource to, they might handle all your digital marketing analytics too, so you can verify that

the work you're paying someone to do is actually, well, paying off.

They can track things such as unique website visits, where people navigate to on your website, if those visits result in a purchase, etc. You can track most marketing tactics, and the person or agency you hire will be more well-versed in this than you are.

Disadvantages of outsourcing marketing

Like anything else, outsourced marketing services come with downsides, but their severity and how much they matter to your business can vary.

You're at the behest of another person

While having someone else in charge of your marketing may seem the ideal situation, it's only as ideal as the person you work with. The winery I worked at outsourced their web design, and it was more work than it was worth. The person who built the website did so in WordPress, but he wrote it in a custom code only he could change, which meant we couldn't even change things as simple as our hours of operation.

Contacting him to make minor but important changes sometimes took weeks. And it created more work for me to make sure our social media clearly stated what our website didn't.

Costs can add up

An outsourced agency can be cheaper than hiring another full-time employee, but the costs can add up depending on the person you hire, what they're doing, and how often you use them.

Setting a budget at the outset of a project is the best way to go. It's much easier to keep track of your costs that way, rather than just paying for things as they come up. For example, you could tell your web designer you have a \$500 budget for a project. They can then put together a few designs for you to consider at that price.

Ideas may not align

Marketing professionals have strong ideas about what they think your business needs, and they may not always align with yours. There's a time and a place to yield to the professional, but hold firm to your views if it's important to you and their approach would diverge too much from the direction your business is going.

Outsourcing marketing vs marketing automation: Which is right for your business?

Automating your marketing can be an option if you're not ready to commit to outsourcing, or you only want to outsource certain things

and retain control of others. There are benefits of marketing automation, just as there are with [outsourcing](#), so consider these things when deciding which is best for your business.

Nothing is ever fully automated

Even if something is advertised as automated, usually someone has to do some amount of work, especially if you don't use all the product's automation functions.

We used [Constant Contact](#) at the winery for our weekly newsletter, but we didn't use the website sign-up form. That meant we had to manually input everyone's name and email address who wanted to receive our newsletter. And we still had to design and create the newsletter each week. So be careful when you automate something like that, as it will likely still require some work from you.

Think about how much control you want

You'll retain some control with both outsourcing and automation, but [marketing automation software](#) tends to give you more because you're the one behind it. If you want to completely relinquish control and responsibility for your marketing and just receive a finished product, outsourcing is your best bet. But to still have some say in the process or change things on a whim, automation might work best for you.

What's more accessible?

Sometimes you don't have the luxury of choosing between outsourcing and automation. Automation will be a better bargain, especially if you choose software that can handle multiple marketing tasks for one flat price. And you may not have a local company to work with for outsourcing, so automation is the next best thing.

If you have only one or two one-time jobs, outsourcing would make more sense than a subscription to another service. It comes down to what's more accessible to your business and what your marketing needs are at any given time.

Final thoughts

Outsourcing your marketing is a great way to handle more business tasks than just marketing. It can help you define and narrow down your audience, refocus your energy on other business operations, and invest in your business's future.

OUR SMALL BUSINESS EXPERT



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Jennifer Post graduated from Rowan University with a degree in Journalism and has almost five years experience writing about all things small business. Her work has appeared on sites such as Business News Daily and Business.com. She specializes in many things, including marketing, software (HR, POS), and business formation. When she's not working, you will almost always find Jennifer whipping up something in the kitchen.